

A HOLY AND HOMELY RESOLVE NO. 1230

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when will You come unto me?
I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”
Psalm 101:2.*

THE hundredth psalm is perhaps the best known song of praise in the Word of God. To sing the “Old Hundredth” has been a habit of worshippers from generation to generation—the custom of every succeeding age as it is still our custom. “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all you lands.” Now, it is somewhat significant that the hundred and first, which immediately follows it, should be such a practical psalm—all about how a man should walk in his house, how he should put away sin from his very eyes, and keep himself from evil companionship. What does it seem to teach us but this, that the best praise is purity and that the best music in the world is holiness? If we would extol the Lord, the best way to do it is to labor to keep His mind before us and to walk in His commandments. The sweetest sounds that ever came from the heaving bellows or the organ pipes can never have so much melody in them as a life that is tuned to the example of Christ. If we obey, we praise. He sings best who works best for God. There is no praise that excels that which is like the praise of angels, “Who do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.”

I suppose that this psalm was written by David about the time when he was invested with regal authority and took the reins of government in his hands. Three times, you will remember, he was anointed king. First, in the house of his father, Jesse the Bethlehemite, when “Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brethren” (1 Sam 16:13); secondly, at Hebron, when “The men of Judah came and there they anointed him king over the house of Judah” (2 Sam 2:4); and thirdly, when all the elders of Israel came to the king 7 ½ years afterwards, “And David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel” (2 Sam 5:3). With the solemn responsibilities of government in view, he sat himself down and considered how he would behave himself when he should come to the throne. And this was the resolution which he passed and labored by the grace of God to carry out. It has been well said that in this psalm David was merry and wise. He was merry, for he said, “I will sing of mercy and judgment.” And he repeated his resolution to sing by saying, “Unto You, O Lord, will I sing.” Such merriment as that it would be well for all of us to cultivate. We cannot sing too much when we sing unto the Lord. And provided that the songs are the songs of Zion, the more of them we sing and the merrier we are in singing them, the better. But he was merry and wise, for having spiritual merriment, he also sought to have spiritual holiness. And so he passed this resolution—“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.”

Our meditation, then, will be of a practical character, and it will divide itself thus. First, in the text we have *a comprehensive resolution*—“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.” Then, as if he were amazed at his resolve, feeling how much he had resolved to do and how little power he had to do it, we have, in the second place, *a devout ejaculation*—“O when will You come unto me?” But, still being firmly set upon his first hallowed resolution, he returns to it, again, and that leads us, in the third place, to notice *a particular application of his resolution*. He applies it to his own domestic household life—“I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” May God the Holy Spirit, who alone can make us practically holy, help us now while we consider the holy resolutions before us.

I. WHAT A COMPREHENSIVE RESOLUTION THIS IS. “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.”

With a full knowledge of all the care and circumspection it entailed on himself—and with as clear an apprehension of all the risks of popularity it involved among his subjects—this was David's *deliberate choice*. Influenced by the grace of God he, like his son Solomon after him, chose wisdom as the principal thing and accounted the fear of the Lord as the choicest safeguard. Many a young man, if he were about to be promoted to a throne, would say, "I will behave myself grandly. In the dignified position to which I am about to be lifted up, I will be every inch a king. I will make them know how stately is my bearing, how sovereign is my word, how nobly I can play my part, how well a crown befits my head. There shall be no Shah or Sultan more dignified than I." David might have chosen an empty conceit, but he did better, he elected a discreet conduct. He said not, "I will behave myself grandly," but, "I will behave myself *wisely*." There are many, too, who, having David's opportunity, would have said, "I will have a merry time of it; once let me mount to Israel's throne, I will give myself up to the full indulgence of every passion. There shall be nothing that my soul shall lust for, but what my hand shall grasp. Let me have horses and chariots in abundance. Give me singing men and singing women. I will get myself all manner of the delights of the flesh with whatsoever enjoyments I can devise. I will behave myself right joyously when once I come into power." Not so David. His deliberate choice was neither grandeur nor pleasure, but wisdom. "I will behave myself *wisely*."

Now, brethren, there must be some of you just starting in life. Before that household is formed, sit down and consider what is the best way of action. Or, perhaps, though you have not yet left your father's house and commenced business for yourself, you contemplate doing so. This, then, is the time to take stock of your moral resolutions. Or, it may be you are in such a condition that you are now starting afresh, commencing life anew, though perhaps farther advanced in years and experience of the world than the young man I have just referred to. Now, how will you act? What will you choose? You shall be happy, indeed, if the grace of God leads you to say, "I choose wisdom, the truest and best wisdom. Be it mine to live as God would have me live—understanding His testimonies and yielding obedience to His laws. Gladly would I live as the incarnate wisdom lived when He was here below. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." I say it was David's deliberate choice. Oh, that every young man and woman here would emulate his example! Oh, that every one of us in our present condition, and in full view of whatever prospects may be opening up before us, might be led now, once and for all, with the full consent of all our powers to say, "Whatever happens to me, this is my resolution—I desire to behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Should others run after gain or fame, ease or luxury, let them cry, 'Who will show me any good?' Let them make self their idol, or follow after gold. As for me, my soul is made up to this one purpose and to seek but this one thing—I would be wise, my God, and behave myself wisely in a perfect way."

This deliberate choice of David was, no doubt, *suggested by a sense of necessity*. He felt that he needed to behave himself wisely. He was to be a king—and a foolish king is no ordinary fool. It used to be a proverb, some three or four hundred years ago, that every king was born a fool. And in truth, they generally so acted as to merit the disgrace. The common people were not too severe in the judgment they passed on their rulers. But, alas, for the misfortunes of a country whose king is a fool. You know what troubles came upon the Jewish nation through Rehoboam and others, who were too foolish to sway the scepter righteously. David could hardly fail to remember that, as he succeeded the dynasty of Saul, Saul's descendants would survive and seek to regain the crown—therefore, he would need to act very discreetly to preserve himself from the pretenders and their faction. He knew that enemies would be sure to track his course to see if they could find any fault with him. He needed, therefore, to have great wisdom if he was to walk aright. "Well," you say, "but the lesson concerns people of rank and pedigree—it does not concern us—we are not going to be kings." Granted, that may be so, but you need wisdom in every grade of society, however lofty or however lowly it may be. The humblest waiting maid, as a Christian, needs wisdom to do her duty and adorn her position. Those entrusted with children need peculiar wisdom, for a child's mind may be warped by a servant as well as by a superior teacher. Any little misfortune happening to a child through your negligence may do it serious damage. If you are a trades-

man, you need wisdom in such an age as this, with competition so fierce and temptation so abundant. And I am sure, if you are a father and you wish to see your children trained up in the fear of God, you have a task before you that might tax the wisdom of a Solomon. It takes true wisdom to judge this boy's disposition and to understand that girl's character, so as neither to be too severe nor too lenient. Much wisdom is needed to know how to deal with each child just as a gardener deals with each separate plant in the conservatory—the one needing dry heat and the other needing moisture—and not injuring or destroying either by applying the wrong treatment. Many have been injudicious with their children, to their own anguish of heart in later days. O parents and heads of households, masters of factories, managers of business houses and you, too—you working men and servants—you all need wisdom and you must have it, or you will make shipwreck. If the fisherman's little boat is wrecked through mismanagement, it is as bad for him, especially if he is drowned in it, as if he had lost the greatest steamship that ever plowed the waters and perished with the vessel. It is his all. And your all is embarked in the momentous voyage of life. If you make shipwreck of the life that God has given you, and the humble position in which He has placed you, it is your all, and to you it is as much a ruin as if you had been a monarch. You need to behave yourselves wisely whatever your vocation in the world may be.

Moreover, David recognized that *to behave one's self wisely, one must be holy*, for he says, "I will behave myself wisely in a *perfect* way." Observe that. He felt he could not be wise if he were unacquainted with the true ideal of absolute unblemished perfection. Wisdom lay only there. Folly might suggest a specious but vacillating policy. That, however, would be an imperfect way. Always remember this. In common life, the wisest thing is the right, straight, undeviating course. The right thing is always the wisest. Sometimes it looks as if it is really necessary to go off the straight line—(you mean to come back again, you know)—just to take a short cut across Bye-Path Meadow and leave the road, for it is covered with flint stones. Surely, you think, it must be better to just cut that corner off. It *seems* so. It *never is*. The tale of Bye-Path meadow is a book of lamentations from beginning to end. Thousands have tried it, but always with the same result. The wise man will keep along the king's highway, cost what it may. We have heard of young men who, under extraordinary pressure, have felt as if they must relax integrity a little to obey a master and thus keep the position they hold. Well, from that time forward their nose has been to the grindstone as long as they have lived. And if they had had the manliness, let alone the godliness, to do the right thing, it would have been the turning point in their entire career and have saved them from a thousand sorrows. But you do not need to be a philosopher and consult huge books to discover how you ought to act under any circumstances. The way to act in every case is to fear God and keep His commandments. Constantly I receive letters asking special counsel for peculiar emergencies. It is to me an everyday annoyance. Persons tell me of painful dilemmas in which they are placed and frequently wish me to reply to such and such a place, without giving their names. Now, they need not ever write to me for *indulgences*. I have no power to grant them. All trouble might be spared. Straight ahead!—that is the way to go in every case. If the conscience of man is elastic, the law of the Lord is inflexible. "What, and lose all I have?" Yes. You will lose less by doing right than you can possibly lose by doing wrong, for if a man were to lose all the property he possessed by a right action, it were better than that he should lose his *soul* by deliberately choosing to avoid poverty or acquire wealth instead of seeking to abide in the favor of God. "I will behave myself wisely," says David. But he knew that the perfect way, the way of right, the way of God, was the way of wisdom. Prince Bismarck may have a long head and a far-seeing eye, and he may be able to dictate the shrewdest policy under the most distracting complications, but were you to consult him in any strait of your own, he could not tell you anything that is wiser than this—to do justice and righteousness and truth towards your fellow men, and to walk humbly with your God. Keep to the eternal principle which God has revealed. Keep to the sacred instinct which the Holy Spirit sows in every regenerate heart. Keep to the example of your Lord and Master, who has bought you with His precious blood. Should it cost you trouble—should it cost you your life—"It were better to enter into eternal life crippled or maimed than, having two eyes or two feet,

to be cast into hell fire.” And, “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?” The perfect way is the wise way and the wise way the perfect.

David seems to have felt that this resolution would cost him a great deal of effort and strength. He does not look upon it as a light thing. He weighed it in all its bearings before he said with so much emphasis I WILL. “I will—behave myself wisely in a perfect way.” Though he does not say as much, he fully implies determination without power. “My will or desire is to behave myself wisely. My dependence is on Him whose cause I espouse.” The next clause seems to say, “I must have more grace and I must get it, too. I must have more help than ever I can find in myself—I must use all the means of grace. I must call in God to be my helper in this matter, for, whatever it may cost, I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.” He felt that character was too momentous to be trifled with—that it must be of sterling metal—or else it were mere dross and that the actions of a man’s life were too signal to be insignificant. It shocks me—I cannot help saying it—it shocks me to my very soul when I hear persons talk about the doctrines of grace, which are dear to my heart as life itself, who uphold the principles while they ignore the practices of godliness, for their lives are inconsistent with their professions. I have known professors that never talk so well about theology as they do when they are half drunk—and never seem to be so sound in the faith as when they can hardly stand on their legs. They will tell you that good works are nothing at all, and they glory in free grace. Ah, dear friends, God save you from being Mr. Talkative who can discuss at great length upon free grace but has never felt the power of it. If the grace of God does not save a man from drunkenness, from lascivious conversation, from lies in trade and lewdness in jests, from slandering your fellow man and scowling at your fellow Christians, then I think the grace of God must be a very different thing from what I read of in this precious book. Either my judgment is at fault or your pretensions are spurious. The grace of God, when it does come, comes freely as the sovereign distinguishing *gift* of heaven—but it makes men to differ and it makes them differ in holiness of character. If a man shall say to me, “Character—I don’t care anything about that,” I am not quick to answer him, neither need anybody care much about him. I think Rowland Hill was right when he said that he did not believe in a man’s religion if his cat and his dog were not the better for it—if everybody in his house were not the better for it. If it does not make you, as a master, gentler and kinder to your servants, if it does not make you, as a servant, more respectful and more diligent, if it does not make you, as tradesmen, more scrupulous and more honest, if it does not make you, as a workman, less of an eye-servant, if it does not, in fact, make you more moral (that is the least thing to say of it)—if it does not make you more holy (that is the higher thing, by far), you may well question whether you know anything about the grace of God in your soul at all. David did not say, “Well, I am washed. He has made me whiter than snow and He has created a new heart and a right spirit within me—and that is quite enough. As to my outward actions, what do they signify? We are not saved by works, you know, it is all of grace.” Ah, but that is not the language of David or of any other legitimate child of God. It is this—“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.” I have heard say that where they talk a great deal about good works you will not find them. But I hope among those of us who talk much about grace, good works will always be found, for where good works do not follow upon faith, such faith, as there seems to be, is dead indeed.

God grant you, dear friends, to take this as the resolution of every child of God—“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.”

II. But now the text is interrupted. There is a break. There is a piece inlaid, as it were, of a different metal. It IS AN EJACULATION. “O, when will You come unto me?”

Many inspired writers, without diverging from their train of thought, interline their purpose with a prayer. There is an old proverb that, “Kneeling never spoils silk stockings.” Prayer, to the preacher, is like provender to the horse. It strengthens and cheers him to go forward. As the scribe halts to mend his pen, or the mower to wet his scythe without loss of time, but rather with more facility to do his work, so you expedite, instead of hinder your business by stopping in the middle of it to offer a word of prayer. So here it is written, “O, when will You come unto me?” And he means by that, “Lord, I want to be

wise. Come and teach me. I want to behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Lord, come and sanctify me. I know not how to act till You instruct me. Open my lips that I may show forth Your praise. Guide my feet that I may run in Your commands. Keep my eyes that they look not upon sin. Hold back my hand from iniquity. When will You come unto me? I need the influence of Your grace to guide me in Your ways. Lord, come and teach me.” Then, he meant further, “Lord, come and assist me. If there is any holiness to which I have not yet attained, come, Holy Spirit, lift me up unto it. If there is any sin which I have not conquered, O, come, You conquering Spirit of holiness, and overcome the evil. When will You come unto me? I am feeble, I can do nothing, but when I have Your mighty aid, I become strong and can perform all things. When will You come unto me?” It is a crying of his soul after divine teaching, divine direction, divine assistance. Nor less, I believe, is it a yearning after divine fellowship. You know, beloved, we never walk aright unless we walk with God. As I have said that holiness is wisdom, so let me say that communion is the mother of holiness. We must see God if we are to be like God. And if from day to day, we can be content without a word from the mouth of God, go to business without prayer, come home and go to our beds without seeking the face of our Father who is in heaven—then, to walk wisely is impossible. The neglect of prayer is a fatal flaw in any life. Communion with God is so essential and the disregard of it is such a folly, that it is simply ridiculous for the negligent man to talk about behaving himself wisely in a perfect way. Godliness is the soul of life. Get near to God—that is the thing. If we walk with Him, we walk in the light. But if we get away from Him, we walk in the darkness. It cannot be otherwise—and he that walks in the darkness will stumble. He may not know why he stumbles, but stumble he will. Only he who walks in the light will be able to pick his steps and verify the blessed fact that, “If we walk in the light as God is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” And thus we are enabled to walk wisely in a perfect way when the light comes to us.

“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O, when will You come unto me?” appears to me like an expression of holy awe, as if he said, “Lord, I had need behave myself aright for You are coming. I am a steward. You are my Master and You are coming to say, ‘Give an account of your stewardship.’ I am a servant. I need mind what I am about and how I acquit myself, for my Master can see me and my Master is on the way to say to me, ‘What have you done with your talent? How have you laid it out?’ When will You come unto me? It makes me feel a trembling in my soul and brings the tears into my eyes when I think of having to go before my Lord to give Him my account. Such a stewardship as mine will not easily be accounted for.” I often envy George Fox, the Quaker, who, as he died, used these remarkable words, “I am clear! I am clear! I am clear!” Doubtless, he meant that he was “clear of the blood of all men”; grand thing for a minister to be able to say! It will need all the grace that God can give a man to be able to say that. Now I ask you, fathers of families, if you were called upon at once, without further notice, to give in your account, can you tell the Lord you are clear about your children? Mothers, can you say you are clear about your boys and girls as to the way you have brought them up—as to your efforts for their souls? Masters, mistresses, are you clear about your servants? Young men, young women, are you clear about those that you work with and in whose houses you live? If the Lord were to say to you, “Come, now, I have entrusted you with a talent, how have you used it?”—are there not some of you who would have to go and take up that napkin in which you have hidden it away till it has grown rusty? “O, when will You come unto me?” seems to me a question full of solicitude. Lord, it may be You will come all of a sudden with surprise, for You have told me that in such an hour as I think not You will appear. Am I ready? Am I able to give a satisfactory account as to what I have done, as Your servant, in my general walk and conversation? Come, let me press these thoughts upon myself and then upon you. “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way,” and well I may, since Your eye is on me, O my God, and Your day is coming when I must be put into the balances. And if I am found wanting, terrible must be my doom, for other eyes than mine shall search my heart, and other scales than I am able to use shall give the final test—and settle once and for all my endless state. God grant you to order

your lives by His grace. You cannot do so without the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh, that whenever the Lord shall come you may meet Him with joy.

III. Now to our third point. After a parenthesis of devotion, he returns with more intense earnestness to his resolution. IN A MOST PRACTICAL MANNER HE CONCENTRATES HIS AIM—"I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

With his house or household in view, for which he felt a deep responsibility and a yearning anxiety, he applies himself with a delicate consideration to the state of his own heart. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." A very wise thing. Elisha healed the springs when the currents ran foul. It is of no use attempting to cleanse the courses when the fountain is corrupt. The thing is to heal the springs. The heart needs putting right. When the heart is right, then all will be right. If anywhere we show our hearts, it is at *home*. There we wear our hearts upon our sleeves. Outside, in the world, it is not safe to show too much of our heart. There are some of us who always say everything that is uppermost. We cannot help it. We have not learned to be guarded yet, and we have had our knuckles rapped pretty dreadfully, sometimes, for our unguardedness. No doubt there are many men of a reserved disposition who go through the world more easily than those of a more open-minded character. At home, everybody should be open-hearted and transparent. Hence the necessity that, if we are to walk aright at home, the matter should begin with the heart being sound. If any man were to say to you, "I mean to be a good husband, a good father"—if any woman shall say, "I mean to be a good mistress," or "a good servant," that will not do unless you understand that the *heart* must, first of all, be altered. If the heart is right, other things will surely follow in their place. Now, the heart, if we are to walk rightly, must show itself in the house. "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." The heart must be perfect. And then we must show our heart in our *actions*. I think it is a miserable thing when a man does not open his heart in the sacred precincts of his own home. I can understand his restraining his feelings abroad, for he may be conscious that he is among rivals rather than friends—but when at home, that restraint is unbecoming. You know the sort of man whose hospitality is repulsive. I have been to see him at his house. I dare say you are welcome, but you would not think you were by the sinister greeting you receive when he shakes hands with you. His hand drops into your hand just like a dead fish. You talk with him and he is perfectly indifferent. When he is most friendly, there is not any freedom in his conversation. Well, now, see the way in which he treats his wife. No love. He is afraid of spoiling her. I recollect very well going to a house where I sat with the husband and I heard a gentle tap at the door. His Lordship said, "Come in." Who should enter but his wife? What a delightful picture of obedience! Knocking at a husband's door occurred to me as not the style of thing that most of us are accustomed to, or would like to see. I very soon perceived that she was the principal *servant* in the house. That was all he accounted her, and she had learned to form no higher estimate of herself. The man had not a heart. We talked about a son that was dead. Well, he seemed to regret that he was gone—he was a very good help to him in his business. That seemed to be the principal point about his deceased son—he was a great help to him in his business. No heart! No heart! No heart! No heart! But it is worse when you see a *woman* with no heart. And there are some. And if they are Christian people—well, I often wonder at the Lord's choice of any of us—but I certainly wonder when He chooses any of that sort. They do not seem to be the stuff out of which you can make a Christian. No feeling—hard "Gradgrindy" sort of people. They seem to think that people are just so many machine wheels to grind round at a regular rate. And the strong-minded woman simply puts a little oil, now and then, occasionally, as a trade, to the machinery and administers it just in that style. No heart! Now David did not mean to go through the world in this fashion. Oh, a house is all the better for having a heart inside it. And a man is a man—and he is more like God, when there is a heart inside his ribs. When he gets home, the children feel that father has got a heart. And as they climb his knees and smother him with kisses, they delight to know that he has a warm heart. And when he greets his dear relatives, especially those that are part and parcel of himself, he has got a soul that goes beyond his own little self and is enlarged and inspires the whole of the family. Oh, give

me heart, and that is what David meant when he said he would behave himself wisely. But when he was in his own house, he would walk with a perfect heart. He would be hearty in everything he did and said.

Well, now, having noticed those two things—that the heart must be right, and that the heart must be expressed—the next thing is that the conduct at home must be well regulated. “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” The Christian man at home should be scrupulous in all departments within his house. We may have different rooms there, but in whatever room we are, we should seek to walk before God with a perfect heart. Ah, dear friends, there are many professors that fail in this. I am not disposed to pry into your homes. I do not want to undertake the task. It would be a sad thing if it were part of a minister’s duty to be peeping through your keyholes, seeing how you act. Still, we have reason to fear that some people, who pass current as saints abroad, behave themselves like devils at home. It used to be so and it is so, still, and you may depend upon it—the *man* is what he is *at home*. This is a simple but a crucial test of character. If a man does not make his family happy, and if his example is not that of holiness in the domestic circle, he may make what pretension of godliness he likes, but his religion is base, worthless, mischievous. The sooner he gets rid of such a profession, the better for himself, for then he may begin to know what he is and where he is, and seek the Lord in spirit and in truth. It is at home that the lack of true religion will do the most damage. If you are a hypocrite and go out into the world, you will soon be found out—and the people who observe you will not be much influenced by your example. They will come to the conclusion that you are what you are, and they will treat you as such, and that will be the end of it. But that will not be so with little Master Johnny, who sees his father’s actions. He is not able to criticize, but he has a wonderful faculty for imitation. And, Mother, it is not likely that little Polly will begin to say, “Mother is inconsistent.” No, she does not know that, but she will take it for granted that mother is right and her character will be fashioned upon your pattern—and you will be injuring her for life unless the grace of God wonderfully prevents it. Why, at home, to our children, especially when they are young, we are, as it were, little gods. They take their law from us and their conduct is shaped according to the pattern we set before them. Round the hearth, if anywhere, holiness ought to be conspicuous, for there, holiness is most beautiful, most useful, and most productive.

It is a blessed thing for some of us that we can look back upon a father’s example and a mother’s example with nothing but unalloyed gratitude to God for both. But there are others among you, who, in looking back, must say, “I thank God I was delivered from the evil influence to which I was subjected as a child.” Do not let your child ever have to say that of you, dear friend, but ask for grace that in your own house you may walk with a perfect heart. For surely, dear friends, if we are not living in our households as we ought to do, this, above all common faults and infirmities, is one of the most disparaging and condemnatory marks with which we can possibly be judged. In the world, we may be under some pressure, but at home, we are left free, for every man’s house is his castle and if, inside his own castle, he does not walk before God, then he stands condemned by the depravity of his temper and his habits. Outside, men are checked and kept within decent bounds by the example and the observation of their fellow men, so that they are not altogether what they seem, but they are partly regulated by what they wish to appear. Even when they are in church, they are under some restraint—they are constrained to show some deference to the place and the assembly. But at home, they are altogether unshackled. They can think aloud, speak without premeditation, follow their own tastes, and gratify their natural inclinations. There, therefore, if anywhere, the man is what he is. Now you need not tell me what kind of appearance you will put on next Sunday morning. You need not tell me that. I would rather ask you to judge yourself by your deportment on Saturday night. I do not particularly ask you how you feel on Thursday night at this particular hour. How will you be at half-past nine? And how will you be tomorrow morning? What will you be to your servants, to your employers, to your children, to your neighbors? If God, by His infinite grace and the power of His Holy Spirit, helps you to walk with a perfect heart at such times and in such places, then will you be an honor to the church of God and you will have a blessing upon your own soul.

Now, the things that I have talked of seem to be very homely, but indeed, they are most important. I love to expound Christian doctrine. I love to open up the promises. This is all sweet work, but we must have the *precepts*. We shall never have a large increase to an unholy church, or, if we do, that increase will be a curse instead of a blessing. I believe that the greatest power in the world, next to the ministry of the Word of God, is, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the holy living of Christian families. Let us plant in this dark world garrisons of holy men and women with their children about them, and this will be a means whereby the world shall be conquered for Christ.

Ah, I may be addressing some who have no part or lot in true religion. It is just possible that they are at the heads of households, and yet they may have never considered this question about walking wisely. Permit me to suggest to you how necessary it is. I have known men who, though very ungodly themselves, have been shocked at the idea of their children growing up in worldliness and wretchedness. And I have, on the other hand, known persons converted late in life who never could forgive themselves when they looked upon their children who had grown up in sin. I remember very well a poor woman who had received good under my ministry and found the Savior. She earned her living by washing. When I went into the house to see her, she hastily wiped her hands and as she greeted me, the tears were in her eyes when she spoke about her conversion, but she wrung her hands in bitterness, for she said, “I was left with six little children when my husband died. As a lonely widow I worked hard for them. I never had any help from anybody, but I brought them up myself and now my son is this, and my daughter is that. But,” she said, “they are, every one of them, unconverted—every one of them. And after I was converted myself I found that I had lost the opportunity of influencing them. I never took my children to the house of God. My eldest boy, when I went to see him the other day, and asked him to go with me, said, ‘No, no. You never took us when we were little and you need never expect us to go now.’” That was the trouble that bowed her down with heaviness when she was relieved of the former obligations to find them daily bread. Oh, fathers and mothers, if you are not converted early, you will live to regret, if God does save you at all, that you saw your youngsters grow up till they got beyond your influence and they grew up unsaved. You young persons who are just commencing life, I do charge you—perhaps God has sent you here that I may ring these counsels and cautions in your ears. Do pause, think, consider, look—and may God give you grace and sense enough to see that it needs wisdom to steer the boat through this voyage of life—and that wisdom only is to be had from heaven.

May you bend your knee at this very hour, and say, “Lord, give me Your grace. Give me a renewed heart. Give me Christ to be my Savior and help me to behave myself rightly in a perfect way till You shall bring me to see You in heaven in Your glory.” God fulfill to you this petition, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—James 1.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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